

CLAIMS:

- 1 A method for packaging a product in a hermetically sealed container having
a cup-shaped rigid or semi-rigid body 106 with a rim 107 fitted with a closure 200,
3 the method comprising:
- 5 (a) introducing the product into said cup-like shaped body 106;
- 7 (b) forming an isolated space 204 with a gas inlet 134 and a gas
outlet 112, the space 204 defined between said body 106 and a
closure-forming member 200 adjacent to and with a clearance from
said rim 107;
- 10 9 (c) introducing a replacement gas through said inlet 134 to replace at
least a substantial portion of gas originally contained in said isolated
space 204; and
- 11 (d) displacing at least one of said body 106 or said closure-forming
member 200 towards the other of the two members to close said
15 clearance and to attach the closure-forming member to said rim 107,
and hermetically attaching the two to one another to form a gas-tight
(steel.) seal
2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein said product is a pasty material.
3. A method according to Claim 1 or 2, wherein said product is a food product.
- 20 4. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the closure-forming member is a
film.
5. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the gas outlet is formed by
bores 211 leading from the isolated space 204 to the external atmosphere.
6. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the gas (outlets) are bores 312 in gas
25 communication with a vacuum source 604.
7. An apparatus for forming a hermetically sealed product-containing
container, the container having an essentially cup-like shaped body 106 with
rims 107 fitted with a closure 200; the product not filling the entire container
leaving residual space 204 therein; the apparatus comprising:

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- 5 6 - a holder 104 for holding said container body 106;
 7 - a spacer member 130 ^{<- -> and} sealingly engageable with said holder 104 and
 with a closure-forming member ^{and} having an opening 132 in a
 state of seal engagement of said spacer member 130 with said
 holder 104 and said closure-forming member 200, said opening 132.
 5 9 said container body 106 and said closure-forming member 200,
 11 define together ^{the} the isolated space 204;
 - a gas inlet 134 and a gas outlet 112 for introducing a replacement gas
 13 into said isolated space 204, and exhausting gas therefrom,
 10 respectively; and
 15 - a sealing mechanism comprising a displacing arrangement for
 displacing one or both of said container body 106 and said closure-
 17 forming member 200 towards one another and attaching them to one
 another in a gas-tight fashion.
- 15 8. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said holder 104 has an
 opening 108 for receiving ^{the} the body 106 of the container.
9. An apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein the opening 108 of the
 holder 104 is fitted with an axially projecting skirt 110 for engagement with ^{the} the
 rim 107 of the container 106.
- 20 10. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein the holder 104 is provided with
 bores 112, serving as gas outlets.
11. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said spacer member 130 has
 gas inlet nozzles 134 formed so they open into (said opening) 132 for introducing a
 replacement gas into (a sealed space).
- 25 12. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said sealing mechanism
 displaces said closure ^{forming} member 200 to sealingly engage said rim 107, through the
 opening ¹³² 132 of said spacer member 130. x

13. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said closure member is a heat weldable film ~~200~~. said container body 106 is made of a plastic material, and the engagement of the film to the container body's rim is by means of heat welding.)
14. An apparatus according to Claim 13, comprising a trimming member 180 for trimming edges of the film 200 after the heat welding.)
15. An apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said gas outlet is connected to a vacuum source ~~606~~.
16. An apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the trimming member 180 and a heat sealing plate 160 of the sealing mechanism are axially displaceable through
10 (an opening in the spacer member) 130.